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SUBJECT: MACEDONIA: POLICE RAID IN TANUSEVCI -- NO REPEAT  
OF 2001

#### SUMMARY

1. (SBU) Early in the morning of May 23, Macedonian police raided several houses in the rural village of Tanusevci, north of Skopje on the Kosovo-Macedonia border, in an operation aimed at uncovering an illegal arms cache. The raid netted only a few rifles but briefly revived ghosts from Macedonia's 2001 inter-ethnic conflict, which began in Tanusevci. We believe this was a routine police operation, and is unlikely to stir the kinds of political passions that were awakened following developments in Tanusevci in 2001. End summary.

#### MEDIA REPORTS ON TANUSEVCI OPERATION

2. (U) Macedonian local media on May 23 carried reports that, early that same morning, Macedonian police raided two houses in the village of Tanusevci, just north of Skopje and across the border from Kosovo's Debelde municipality, in a search for an illegal arms cache. The search reportedly yielded one automatic rifle, one semi-automatic rifle, and some ammunition. Electronic media coverage of the raid showed some footage of an eAlbanian woman from Tanusevci who allegedly went into shock after the police actions. As the police were leaving the village, they reportedly heard shots which came either from the village or from the Kosovo side of the border.

#### POLICE CHIEF DEBRIEF ON POLICE COUNTER-SMUGGLING OPERATION

3. (SBU) Given historical sensitivities related to Tanusevci, where the 2001 inter-ethnic conflict began, PolOff met with Macedonian Director of Police Todorovski on May 25 for a debrief on the police action. Todorovski said he had given the order for the Tanusevci raid on May 22, based on reports he had received from Deputy Minister of Interior Refet Elmazi, an eAlbanian. Elmazi claimed he had information suggesting there were large stacks of weapons in two remote, unoccupied houses on the outskirts of Tanusevci.

4. (SBU) Todorovski said that, shortly before 0600 hours on May 23, a combined team of around 90 eAlbanian and eMacedonian police officers from the MOI's Illegal Trade and Smuggling Department, the Alfa Special Forces, and the Rapid Reaction Force, surrounded the two houses. The police

discovered only two rifles, one handgun, and a large quantity of ammunition in one of the houses. The owner of the house, Refik Senani, was questioned and sent home. He likely will face trial for possession of illegal weapons. Todorovski stressed that eAlbanian policemen had been the first on the scene and that, contrary to some press reports, there had been no women or children in the vicinity of the raid.

#### SHOTS FIRED IN ANGER?

15. (SBU) Todorovski acknowledged that the police had been fired on by villagers believed to be connected to former National Democratic Party (NDP) Member of Parliament and National Liberation Army (NLA) army commander, Xhezair Shaqiri. Even though the police raid targeted an organized smuggling ring, Todorovski believes that Shaqiri's people fired at the police in the belief that the law enforcement officers were in Tanusevci to arrest a fugitive from justice who was under Shaqiri's protection. He said that, according to his informants in Tanusevci, the shooters were a group of seven local men and about 10 Kosovar Albanian males, most of them regular smugglers who operate across the Kosovo-Macedonia border. Todorovski assured PolOff that mixed police patrols have not experienced problems with regular access to the village in the past. He added that the majority of Tanusevci's inhabitants do not support the activities of the smugglers.

#### "EYE WITNESS" ACCOUNTS GIVEN TO OSCE

16. (SBU) Interviews conducted by an OSCE team that visited Tanusevci hours after the raid painted a picture at odds with that of the Director of Police. According to the villagers, 300-400 Special Forces police had stormed the village and harassed around 20 eAlbanian villagers who lived in the two

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houses. At the end of the operation, according to ex-guerrilla commander Xhezair Shaqiri, who was not in the village during the raid, the villagers exchanged fire with the police and "drove them out, head over heels."

#### COMMENT

17. (SBU) The police raid in Tanusevci stirred up memories of 2001, since that is where fighting broke out that erupted into inter-ethnic conflict that year. Linked directly to Kosovo, Tanusevci was an important NLA stronghold in the 2001 conflict, and saw the abduction of a Macedonian TV crew and the killing of the first Macedonian victim of the conflict, a police officer. Since then, however, the village has developed a reputation for smuggling and illegal connections to Kosovo, which the government is concerned about. We believe this was a routine but largely unsuccessful police operation. The police action is unlikely to stir up the political passions that heated up after developments in Tanusevci in 2001, however, especially given the commitment of all major eAlbanian parties to non-violent participation in the political system.

WOHLERS